

Spring 8-15-2013

ENG 2003-001: Creative Writing: Poetry

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Recommended Citation

Pence, Charlotte, "ENG 2003-001: Creative Writing: Poetry" (2013). *Fall 2013*. 51.
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ENGLISH 2003: CREATIVE WRITING, POETRY
FALL 2013

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Course Information:
TR 2-3:15
Room: CH 3159
Section 001

*—Ends are what define poetry. Line breaks. Mortality. If you
want middles, go read a novel. If you want happy endings, go
read a cook book.*

—Dean Young

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry* edited by Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux
- *The Great Fires* by Jack Gilbert
- *Meadowlands* by Louise Glück
- *Poetry: A Pocket Anthology*, 7th Edition, Edited by R.S. Gwynn. (Bring to every class.)
- A writer's notebook of your choice. (Bring to every class.)
- Three-ring binder or folder to keep all of the poems and handouts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory creative writing course emphasizes the art and craft of poetry. Through intensive reading and analysis of contemporary poetry, we will learn how to identify, define, and apply literary devices to our own poetry. We will keep regular writing notebooks where we will begin poems and hone our craft. Since part of the writing process is the revision process, workshop will play a fundamental role in our course. In workshop, our poems will be read, critiqued, and evaluated with the goal of a polished manuscript being presented by each writer at the semester's end.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Ten poems will be submitted to the class over the course of the semester. Starting our fifth week, one poem will be submitted to the class every Tuesday. The following Thursday, we will workshop a few of these poems. Please use a standard font such as Times and in the right hand corner include your name, the date, and "Poem #." Many weeks, we will be writing poems from assignments that I provide based on the class's current needs and interests.

A writer's notebook is key to the writing process and a requirement for this course. Most weeks, I will provide writing exercises. Some of them will be turned in for workshop and some of them will not be. All of the writing exercises will stretch your creativity and help you practice craft elements that can be used for later poems. We will also write in class together, so always bring the notebook to class. Most writers I know carry a notebook with them at all times to record images, bits of dialogue, poem ideas, etc., so this is a good habit to acquire. I encourage all of you to try to write at least six lines a day in this notebook since a writer is simply one who writes often. I will collect these notebooks twice during the semester and grade based on completed exercises and regular entries.

Reading and writing assignments will be our way to learn about the craft of writing. In order for the class to be both challenging and organic, I will assign most of our readings and writing assignments on a weekly basis. So, check in with your email and D2L regularly and be aware that it is your responsibility to keep up with the assignments not only listed in the syllabus but on D2L as well. Also, some of our readings will be posted under the library's e-Reserve. To access those readings, go to the library's Web site and click on reserves: <http://www.library.eiu.edu/reserves/>. From there, you will be able to log on and find our course. Our password is: _____.

Workshops will encompass half of the in-class work that we will do. We will divide our class into three groups to make the workshops more in-depth. For each workshop, you are required to write editing and revision suggestions on each poem in that group. If you are not being workshopped that week, you only need to turn in one copy of your weekly poem to me. If you are being workshopped, you will need to bring copies for every person in the class. No emailed workshop poems will be allowed.

We will discuss proper workshop etiquette in class, but the general guideline is to braid together honesty, specificity, and kindness since one without the others will not serve the writer. Also keep in mind that poems for workshops should have undergone at least two to three drafts before bringing them to us for suggestions. Not everything you write will be wonderful and not everything you write will be horrible. These are the extremes. What is more likely is that you will write poems that are somewhere in between—and we will help each other move the poems in the direction the poem wants to be moved.

A final manuscript of your poems will be submitted for the final exam. The manuscript needs to be submitted in a black paper folder (no three-ring binders). Within this manuscript, include a title page, a table of contents, an epigraph, six poems that you have heavily revised (placed after the epigraph) followed by all ten poems that you submitted throughout the semester with my comments on them. For the six revised poems, I would like the original workshop poem placed directly behind it so that I can see how extensive the revisions are. The majority of the final manuscript's grade stems from the seriousness of revision. Also include in the back of the manuscript one analysis (that is at least 300-words) of a reading that you attended. Also include the poem that you memorized in this final manuscript. (If you quote from a poem, be sure to cite it appropriately with footnotes and quote poetry lines according to MLA guidelines.) Please note: it is your responsibility to keep your work throughout the semester.

In addition to the above material, also include a 2-3 page critical introduction on what you wanted to revise, why, and how you went about the process with three of the six revised poems. In this reflection, be sure to explain how you came to decide what needed to be revised and why. Also, be sure to note how your revision strategies were specifically tailored to your poem's needs.

Participation is critical in this course. The time we spend together is our opportunity to expand our views on what is poetry, to build a writer's community, and to learn the craft behind the art. In *Mystery and Manners*, fiction writer Flannery O'Connor reflects on the value of writers interacting with one another. She says that unless the writer "has gone utterly out of his mind, his aim is still communication, and communication suggests talking inside a community." At the end of the semester when I reflect on your participation, I will consider not only how often you contributed to class discussions, but the quality of those comments. I will also consider your seriousness with in-class writing assignments in the participation grade as well. Text messaging (even once) and other distractions such as checking email in class (again, even once) will result in a failing participation grade for the semester. Since cultivating a supportive and challenging writers' community is critical to our growth as writers, participation counts as 20% of your grade.

Attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines are all part of the writing life. There are days you may not want to write, but writers write—when they feel inspired or not. Coming to class is part of your obligation to your creativity and to your writing community. To help build a writers' community, the course depends upon everyone's participation and attendance. Therefore, missing four courses will lower your final grade by one-third. (An "A" becomes a "B+" for example.) Five absences will lower your final grade by another third. (An "A" becomes a "B"). Six absences will result in failure of the course. To allow adequate time for class discussion and in-class writing, arrive on time. Being late twice (or leaving early twice) will be considered an absence. This attendance policy applies to all students regardless of whether one is missing class due to a school-sanctioned event, university athletics, or illness. And be aware that there is no such thing as an "excused absence." Finally, if you arrive without the day's reading printed out or in book-form in front of you, you will be counted as absent.

Also, I do not accept late work which includes occasions when you are absent. If you must be absent, you may email me your work before the class to receive credit for it. Also, if you miss a day that you are workshopped, you will simply miss your workshop. (Fifty points will also be deducted from your participation grade for each missed workshop.) The reason for this strict policy on not accepting late work is to help build discipline as writers. Procrastination can be the creative killer to writers, so I am trying to take the option of "later" off the table.

A memorized poem of your choice (of at least ten lines) will be recited to the class. This is going to be a spontaneous event, so whenever you are ready and feel moved by the poetic spirit, recite to us your poem with full gusto. I would recommend you do it early, so you can enjoy the show.

A **mid-term** will be given and will cover poems we have read in class and poetic terms we have learned. You will also write a short analysis of a poem for this exam. Your writing journals will be graded at this time.

GRADING

We have a total of 1000 possible points in this class. Assignments are proportioned as follows:

Ten weekly poems worth ten points each: 100 points	(10%)
Writer's Notebook:	
Beginning to Mid-Term Grade: 50 points	(5%)
Mid-Term to Final Grade: 50 points	(5%)
Mid-Term Exam: 100 points	(10%)
Class Participation: 200 points	(20%)
Final Manuscript/Final Exam: 500 points	(50%)
The final manuscript will include the following:	
Six revised poems: 300 points (50 points each poem)	
Presentation of manuscript: 30 points	
Analysis of attended poetry reading: 50 points	
Memorized poem: 50 points	
Past weekly poems with my comments: 20 points (2 points each)	
Critical Introduction: 50 points	

Grading scale is as follows:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 0-59

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be dealt with according to university policy, which can be found on the Office of Judicial Affairs pages. First offense will be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs and **will result in a grade of F** for this class. I think we all know what plagiarism is by now: the willful “appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work” (from *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*). In sum, do your job, which means do your own work.

If you have a **documented disability** and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (217-581-6583) as soon as possible. The Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS) is “committed to facilitating the provision of equal access and opportunity to all campus programs and services for students with disabilities” (from EIU’s web site).

Poetry is a verbal means to a nonverbal source.
—A.R. Ammons from *A Poem is Walk*

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES

- Various anthologies that compile what is being published right now such as *The Best American Poetry* series, Pushcart anthologies, and *Best New Poets* series.
- Anthologies that compile work by our important poets. Some of my favorites include:
 - *Strong Measures*, an anthology of poems in received form with explanations
 - *Poetry 180* edited by Billy Collins
 - *Contemporary American Poetry* edited by A. Poulin, Jr.
 - *Vintage Book of Contemporary World Poetry*
 - *Poet's Choice* by Edward Hirsch, a collection of 130 poets from all over the world with Hirsch's reflections on each poem.
- *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver for craft
- *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg for warm-up exercises
- *Poet's Guide* by Michael J. Bugeja for publishing and performance guidelines
- *The Art of the Poetic Line* by James Logenbach and any book in this series by Graywolf
- *The Triggering Town* by Richard Hugo for craft and workshop discussions
- *Neruda and Vallejo* translated by Robert Bly and James Wright
- *Otherwise* by Jane Kenyon
- *Above the River* by James Wright
- *Neon Vernacular* by Yusef Komunyakaa
- *Embryoyo* by Dean Young
- *Beowulf* translated by Seamus Heaney
- *Region of Unlikeness* by Jorie Graham
- *The Rose* by Lee Young-Li
- *The Niagara River* by Kay Ryan
- Poetry Web sites such as Academy of American Poetry, Poetry Daily, Poetry Foundation, Verse Daily, and The Writer's Almanac.
- Literary journals such as *Fence*, *Bluestem* (national journal based out of EIU), *Missouri review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Ploughshares*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Review*, and *Tin House*.
- Online journals such as *Best New Poems Online*, *Blackbird*, *Diagram*, and *Typo*.

"Beauty plus pity—that is the closest we can get to a definition of art."

—Vladimir Nabokov

COURSE SYLLABUS

Please note that the following syllabus may be altered and that additional assignments will appear on D2L. I will email when I post these assignments. Be sure to check both the syllabus and your email for each class.

(I will refer to *The Poet's Companion* as "P.C." in your assignments.)

FOCUS: CONCRETE LANGUAGE AND DISCOVERY

WEEK ONE

Tuesday 8/20: Introduction to class.

Thursday 8/22: Read Mary Oliver's "The Black Walnut Tree," "Honey at the Table," and Simon Ortiz's "The Serenity in Stones" from your anthology.
In-class writing and discussion on concrete language.

FOCUS: CONCRETE LANGUAGE AND DISCOVERY

WEEK TWO

Tuesday 8/27: **Reading and Writing due:** "Writing and Knowing" pp. 19-29 from P.C. and read all of the "Ideas for Writing" at the end of both chapters and choose one exercise from each chapter to do. Write these exercises in your writer's notebook.
More Reading: Introduction to our anthology (1-18), poems by James Wright, Sharon Olds, and Yusef Komunyakaa.

Thursday 8/29: **Writing due:** Prose paragraph.
In-class critique of prose paragraphs.

FOCUS: CONCRETE LANGUAGE AND DISCOVERY

WEEK THREE

Tuesday 9/3: **Reading due:** *The Great Fires*, by Jack Gilbert and the chapter "The Shadow" from P.C.
Writing due: Choose two exercises from "The Shadow" chapter and do them in your writer's notebook.

Thursday 9/5: *The Great Fires*, by Jack Gilbert
Continued discussion in-class on specificity and unexpectedness.

FOCUS: FIGURES OF SPEECH

WEEK FOUR

Tuesday 9/10: **Reading due:** Section on figurative language in our anthology (pp. 18-29) and poems by Brian Turner, Suji Kwock Kim, and A.E. Stallings.

Thursday 9/12: **Reading due:** Chapter from P.C. on “Simile and Metaphor.”

FOCUS: FINDING A SUBJECT

WEEK FIVE

Tuesday 9/17: **Poem due:** Work Poems

Thursday 9/19: Poetry Workshop for Group One

FOCUS: IMAGES

WEEK SIX

Tuesday 9/24: **Poem due**
Reading due: Read chapter on “Images” from P.C.

Thursday 9/26: Poetry Workshop for Group Two

FOCUS: LINE BREAKS/SYNTAX

WEEK SEVEN

Tuesday 10/1: **Poem due:** Metaphor Poem
Reading due: Read “Music of the Line” in P.C. and
do one exercise of your choice from the end of the chapter.

Thursday 10/3: Poetry Workshop for Group Three

FOCUS: STRUCTURE/FORM (REPETITION AS FORM)

WEEK EIGHT

Tuesday 10/8: **Writer’s Notebook due**
Mid-Term Exam

Thursday 10/10: **Poem due:** Sestina, Pantoum, or Villanelle
Reading due: “Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues” and “More
Repetition” in P.C.

FOCUS: STRUCTURE/VOICE

WEEK NINE

Tuesday 10/15: **Poem due**
Reading due: Louise Glück’s *Meadowlands*

Thursday 10/17: Poetry Workshop for Group One

Focus: VOICE

WEEK TEN

Tuesday 10/22:

Poem due: Read pages 127-128 from P.C. and turn in a poem that comes from any one of the following exercises: 1, 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reading due: Chapter on "Voice and Style" in P.C.

Continued discussion on *Meadowlands*

Thursday 10/24:

Poetry Workshop for Group Two

FOCUS: STRUCTURE/SONNET

WEEK ELEVEN

Tuesday 10/29:

Poem due

Thursday 10/31:

Poetry Workshop for Group Three

FOCUS: STRUCTURE/SONNET

WEEK TWELVE

Tuesday 11/5:

Poem due: Sonnet

Reading due: "Sonnet 18" and "Winter" by Shakespeare; Donne "Holy Sonnet 10" and "Holy Sonnet 14"; Wordsworth "It Is a Beauteous Evening"; Cummings "pity this busy..."; Jarman "After Disappointment"; and Wright "Saint Judas" from your anthology.

Thursday 11/7:

Poetry Workshop for Group One

FOCUS: VOICE

WEEK THIRTEEN

Tuesday 11/12:

Poem due: Do the writing exercise on page 249 of P.C. titled "Talking to God."

Guest Reader

Thursday 11/14:

Poetry Workshop for Group Two

FOCUS: REVISION

WEEK FOURTEEN

Tuesday 11/19:

Poem due: Translation. See instructions below.

ASSIGNMENT: Write a brief, freeverse poem, no shorter than ten lines, no longer than fourteen. Once the poem is presentable for workshop, enter the poem into an online foreign language translator. Turn in a copy of the original to me and have the translated version also ready to be turned in and typed on another piece of paper.

Thursday 11/21:

Poetry Workshop for Group Three

WEEK FIFTEEN

Tuesday 11/26: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

Thursday 11/28: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

FOCUS: REVISION

WEEK SIXTEEN

Tuesday 12/3

Revised Poem Due (bring 5 copies)

Reading and writing assignment posted on D2L under
"Revision Assignment"

In-class reading of revised poems and workshop.

Writer's Notebook due

Thursday 12/5

Class Reading! Location: TBA

Final Exam: Monday, December 9th, 2:45-4:45 in my office.

Your portfolios are due at this time. If you would like them mailed to you over the break, please provide a SASE 9x14 envelope. You'll need about \$3.50 in postage. Otherwise, you may pick up your portfolios once the spring semester begins.

2. Learning to write is a simple process: read something, then write something; read something else, then write something else. And show in your writing what you have read.

6. You do not learn from work like yours as much as you learn from work unlike yours.

15. Prose is prose because of what it includes: Poetry is poetry because of what it leaves out.

—From Marvin Bell's "52 Statements About Poetry"

